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ABSTRACT

Violent incidents among at-risk middle school and high school students are discussed. The type and frequency of these incidents are identified, but the focus is on factors such as the relationship among the antagonists, the sequence of events and escalations, and the goals and justifications cited by the students. Information is drawn from in-depth interviews with 110 students from public schools at which the level of violence is high. The 110 students, 86 of whom were African Americans, reported 250 incidents of violence. Data show that the problem of violence is growing, as is juveniles' risk of victimization. The design of this study was chosen to provide information that can be used in the curricula of school-based conflict resolution programs. In the largest proportion of incidents, the first step was relatively minor, but escalated. About 5% eventually involved a gun. Most incidents took place among young people who knew each other, and most incidents started in the school or the home. The most common goal was retribution, followed by an attempt to bring about compliance, and self defense or defense of one's image, and justifications offered stemmed from a value system in which violence was acceptable. In adopting the findings to violence prevention programs, reducing the frequency of opening moves may be the most promising approach. (Contains five exhibits.) (SLD)

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U.S. Department of Justice
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National Institute of Justice

Research in Brief

Jeremy Travis, Director

October 1997

Issues and Findings

Discussed in this Brief: Violent incidents among at-risk middle school and high school students, which often escalate from seemingly trivial events. The type and frequency of these incidents are identified in this study, but the major focus is on such factors as the relationship among the antagonists; the sequence of events in the confrontation, including the "opening moves"; and the goals and justifications cited by the students. The information was drawn from indepth interviews with 110 students who attend public schools in which the level of violence is high.

Key issues:

- Data from assault studies reveal that arguments resulting in violence are a considerable problem for American youths, as both victims and aggressors. The problem is growing, as juveniles' risk of victimization has risen since the mid-1980s, especially among African-Americans. For aggravated assault, the juvenile arrest rate is projected to rise.
- There are few ethnographic studies of violence among middle and high school students, but studies of adult offenders reveal concepts that may apply to the analysis of these students' behavior.
- The study design was chosen specifically for its value in generat-

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Violence Among Middle School and High School Students: Analysis and Implications for Prevention

by Daniel Lockwood, Ph.D.

Adolescent violence is partly attributable to escalating sequences of events that culminate in outcomes unintended by the participants. Although the young people who engage in violence do not intend the outcome, they nevertheless suffer the consequences—either the harm that comes from being victimized or the punishment that comes from being the aggressor. This type of violence is extensive. An estimated 16 percent of all high school students in this country have been in one or more physical fights on school property in the course of a year.[1] Victimization rates for simple assault are highest among young people ages 12 to 19.[2] The problem is increasing, because while some types of violent crime are declining, the risk of being a victim of this type of crime has risen since the mid-1980s among juveniles ages 12 to 17. The same is true with the more serious offense of aggravated assault; juvenile arrests for this offense are projected to rise.[3]

Aggravated assault and even homicide, which include young people as victims and offenders, often result from events similar to those triggering less serious offenses—transactions over seemingly trivial matters, occurring between people who know each other. This study of violent incidents among middle and high school students focused not only on the types and frequency of these incidents but also on their dynamics—the locations, the "opening moves," the relationship between disputants, the goals and justifications of the aggressor, the role of third parties, and other factors.

The violent incidents were analyzed to create general models of the sequence or pattern of events in the interactions among disputants. The analysis confirmed that the opening moves involved such actions as minor slights and teasing, and the incidents took place largely among young people who knew each other. What is perhaps most troubling is the finding that the students' violent behavior did *not* stem from lack of values. Rather, it was grounded in a well-developed set of values that holds such behavior to be a justifiable, commonsense way to achieve certain goals.

Information about the typical steps that culminate in violent incidents, the rationales for those incidents, the most common locations where the incidents take place, and how the disputants and others are re-

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Issues and Findings

continued...

ing information that can be used to create or enhance violence prevention programs. This information could be incorporated into the curriculums of school-based conflict resolution programs.

Key findings:

- In the largest proportion of violent incidents, the "opening move" involved a relatively minor affront but escalated from there. Few opening moves were predatory.

- The largest number of incidents took place among young people who knew each other, and the school or the home was the place where most incidents began.

- The most common goal was retribution, and the justifications and excuses offered indicated this stemmed not from an absence of values but from a well-developed value system in which violence is acceptable.

- The findings regarding location, duration, relationship of disputants, and the roles of peers and adults can be used in designing and improving violence prevention programs. The patterns of events created by the researchers can indicate areas for intervention, with a focus on the opening moves.

- In adopting the findings to violence prevention programs, reducing the frequency of opening moves may be the most promising approach. Changing the underlying value system is more difficult, although it is central to reducing violence.

Target audience: Teachers and other educational staff; staff of youth agencies; public health, juvenile justice, and criminal justice officials and practitioners; researchers and practitioners in conflict resolution and related areas; and others concerned with violence prevention.

lated can be useful in designing effective prevention programs aimed at developing nonviolent responses. In fact, the analysis was conducted with the express purpose of generating information that can be used to take preventive action. Knowing where in the sequence of events leading to a violent incident a certain action takes place can aid in identifying points for intervention. If such intervention occurs during the early, opening moves, it might be possible to prevent escalation to more serious violence. Changing the cultural norms or values that justify these violent incidents may be a more difficult task.

The students, their schools, and their neighborhoods

The study was based on the experiences of middle school and high school students. The middle school is in an economically disadvantaged African-American section of a large Southern city. The neighborhood this middle school serves, which includes a public housing complex, has experienced some of the highest rates of reported violent crime in the country. The high school is an "alternative school" attended by children who have committed serious violations of school rules, largely those involving illegal drugs, possession of handguns, or fighting. Many students in this high school, which is located in a large city in the southern part of the Midwest, come from high-crime areas, including public housing communities.

Since the schools were selected for having high rates of violence, the students in the study were assumed to stand a greater chance of becoming involved with violence. For that reason, their involvement cannot be said to reflect the behavior of the general student bodies of middle schools and high schools.

The study's perspective

The interviews were open-ended, with the students encouraged to speak at length about the violent incidents in which they had been involved. A total of 250 "incidents," most taking place within the past year, came to light in the interviews. The conversations explored the dynamics of the incidents from the perspective of the young people and were concerned with behavior, emotions, values, and attitudes at different steps of the violent encounter. The researchers examined such factors as goals, excuses, and justifications for the incidents. This approach stemmed from the researchers' "social interactionist" perspective, which explains behavior through the analysis of interaction among people. Thus, from this perspective force or violence is viewed as rational behavior to the extent it is designed to effect change in the target of the violence.[4]

There has been little research in the nature of violent interactions among middle and high school students, especially qualitative ethnographic studies conducted from a social interactionist perspective. This type of research requires considerable investments in time and other resources, as well as the skills of trained interviewers.[5] However, such studies have been conducted among adults, and they disclose key information about the dynamics of the violent events. These studies, which concerned dispute-related violence and were based on interviews with adult convicted offenders, reveal salient themes:

- A "character contest" may develop in which neither party will back down. The disputants then create a "working agreement" that the situation calls for violence.[6]

- A key step in the transaction is often an event that the offender interprets as an offense requiring saving face.

• Offenders often make a rational choice to be violent, a choice with generally one of three goals: to gain compliance, to restore justice, or to assert and defend identities.[7]

These themes may be relevant to the study of juveniles and suggest areas for preventive intervention. Indeed, the intent of the present study is to contribute knowledge that can be used to prevent violence among young people. School-based conflict resolution programs, which have increased greatly in recent years, may be especially appropriate mechanisms for such intervention.[8] Many of them follow interactive "social problem solving" or "social skills" models, whose curriculums would be suitable to integrating the findings of studies that use the concepts analyzed here. These curriculums might be enhanced by incorporating into their simulations, role playing, and psychodramas (structured human relations exercises) the details of incident locations, the relationships among participants, opening moves, the patterns and sequences of events, and the goals and justifications cited for acting violently—all of which are treated in this study. Prevention programs might focus on the specific events or "moves" leading up to a violent incident and intervene at that point to modify behavior or take other action.

Study Design and Method

The information about violent incidents among students in middle school and high school was based on interviews conducted with 70 boys and 40 girls who attended public schools in which the rate of violence was high. Of these 110 students, 58 were selected at random from a student body of about 750 at a middle school in an economically disadvantaged African-American section of a large Southern city. The neighborhood the school served, which included a public housing project, had some of the country's highest rates of reported violent crime. Another 52 students volunteered from an alternative school, a high school attended by students who had committed serious violations of school rules. This school is located in a large city in the southern part of the Midwest.

Of the total number, 86 were African-American and 24 were white. Only students who received permission from their parents to participate were included in the study.

The 110 interviews yielded 250 incidents, almost all of which (90 percent) occurred within 12 months of the interview and half within 6 months. The structure of the interviews, most of which lasted about an hour, was open-ended, with respondents encouraged to speak at length about violent incidents in which they had been involved.

To permit quantitative analysis, the content of the interviews was converted to a database, and the violent incident became the unit of analysis. Qualitative analysis was conducted as well from a selection of interview excerpts and the ideas emerging from them.* In addition, the incidents were analyzed to reveal the sequence of events they shared in common, with each "move" (or event) in the overall transaction identified and the sequences then grouped to reveal typical patterns.

*This type of qualitative analysis was based on the use of QSR NUD.IST software.

Characteristics of the incidents

Frequency and seriousness. Violence was defined in this study as "an act carried out with the intention, or perceived intention, of physically injuring another person."[9] Each of the 250 incidents included at least one physical indicator of force or violence and included such behaviors as throwing something at the other person; pushing, grabbing, or shoving; slapping, kicking, hitting with a fist; hitting with an object; threatening with a gun or knife; or using a gun or knife.

These behaviors constitute a scale of least serious to most serious. Kicking, biting, or hitting with the fist was the most frequent violent incident, occurring in two-thirds of the cases. (See exhibit 1.) Use of a knife occurred least frequently (in 2 percent of the incidents).

The most serious behavior on the scale, using a gun, occurred 5 percent of the time. None of the incidents involving guns took place in school. Half the gun incidents were robberies in which respondents were victims or offenders, and in most of the rest the guns were brandished for self-defense.

Gender differences. The involvement of girls was more extensive than might be expected. The average number of incidents per student was about the same for the 40 girls in the study as it was for the 70 boys. While boys tended to fight mainly with other boys, girls were involved in almost as many fights with boys as with other girls. Moreover, girls were the offenders in all incidents in which knives were used. Most of these knife incidents began in school.

Relationships of antagonists. The largest number of incidents took place among people who knew each other. More than half (58 percent) were among acquaintances, 16 percent

Exhibit 1: ***Type and Frequency of Violence in Incidents Among Selected Public School Students***

	Number of Incidents*	Percentage of All Incidents (n=250)
Threw something	36	14%
Pushed, grabbed, shoved	138	55%
Slapped	42	17%
Kicked/bit/hit with fist	168	67%
Hit with something	35	14%
Beat up	52	21%
Threatened with gun	25	10%
Threatened with knife	19	8%
Used knife	6	2%
Used gun	13	5%

Note: Percentages do not equal 100% because there were multiple responses.
* Incidents in which behavior occurred at least once.

among friends, and 15 percent among family members (mostly siblings or cousins). Only 11 percent were among strangers.

Criminal circumstances. While 26 incidents occurred during a crime, only 3 of these were related to illegal drugs. The others were mostly robberies and thefts, incidents that placed young people at risk of serious injury, since guns often played a role.

Role of adults. The adults in charge of these young people found out about only half the incidents. Of the other half, teachers, mothers, and police officers became involved at some point in the sequence of events. Police were on the scene in 18 percent of the violent transactions, generally after the final combat.

Role of peers. Made up largely of friends and relatives, third parties were present in about 60 percent of the incidents. Their most common role was to encourage violence or to join in fights out of loyalty to a combatant. In only nine incidents did they attempt to mediate disputes.

Duration of incidents. The large majority of the incidents were short lived. While 70 percent lasted 15 minutes or less from the initial provocation to the final combat, only 20 percent took an hour or longer.

Commitment to violence. "Working agreements" similar to those revealed in the studies of adults' dispute-related violence were common. These are agreements in which invitations or challenges to fight are offered and then accepted. They preceded actual combat in almost two-thirds (62 percent) of the incidents.

Feelings of disputants. Fear was infrequently felt among the students, occurring in only 14 percent of the incidents. Not surprisingly, most of the incidents that provoked fear were the ones involving guns. Anger was more common than fear, with students in 62 percent of the incidents saying they experienced it. However, anger was seldom offered as an excuse for engaging in violence.

The "opening moves"

The "opening move" is the action of the student, the student antagonist, or third party that initiates the violent incident.[10] Analysis of the sequence of events constituting the incidents revealed common patterns—"scripts" or specific sequences of events that followed these opening moves.

Types. Few opening moves involved robbery or theft. Many more involved unprovoked offensive touching. (The types, number, and percentage of the moves are presented in exhibit 2.) In very few scripts (less than 10 percent) did any move following the opening move aim at avoiding violence, such as an attempt to take evasive action or influence this attempt. In the large majority of incidents (about 70 percent), the students described the antagonist—not themselves—as the one making the opening move.

Locations. About three-quarters of the violent incidents began in school or at home. (Exhibit 3 shows where the incidents began.) Of the school-based incidents, about half took place in school itself, and of these, about half occurred in the classroom. Gyms and other institutional recreation areas—sites supervised by adults—were often the locus of violent conflict in addition to classrooms. The structured activities that brought young people together in these settings facilitated confrontations.

Goals and values

The students cited these as the most frequent aims of their violent behavior:

- Retribution—punishing the antagonist for something he or she did (40 percent of all goals).

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- Compliance—convincing the antagonist to desist from an offensive course of action (22 percent).
- Defense of one's self or others (21 percent).
- Promotion of one's image—by saving face, defending one's honor, or enhancing or maintaining one's reputation (8 percent).

Rationalizing violence

The explanations the students offered for the violent-incident behavior confirm their belief that this type of behavior is acceptable. (Exhibit 4 presents the type, number, and percentage of these reasons.) Explanations categorized as "justifications" are those in which the young people accepted responsibility for their violent actions but denied the actions were wrong. The vast majority (84 percent of the accounts) fell into this category. The others were categorized as "excuses," or explanations in which the young people admitted the act was wrong but denied responsibility.

Justifications. The primary themes that justified violence in the eyes of these young people corroborate the

Exhibit 2: ***Opening Moves in Violent Incidents Among Students—Type and Number***

	Number	Percentage
Unprovoked offensive touching: throws, pushes, grabs, shoves, slaps, kicks, or hits	33	13%
Possessions: interferes with something owned or being used	32	13%
Request to do something	26	10%
Backbiting: someone says something bad about another person to someone else and this gets back to the person	23	9%
Play: verbal teasing (playful "put downs") or rough physical play	23	9%
Insults: not meant to be playful	18	7%
Crimes[a]	16	5%
Accusations of wrongdoing	13	5%
Defense of others	11	4%
Challenges: physical or nonverbal gestures	7	3%
Threats of physical harm	7	3%
Advances to boyfriend or girlfriend of actor	7	3%
Told authority figure about bad behavior of actor	3	1%
Other actions perceived as offensive[b]	23	9%
Other[c]	6	2%
Total	248	100%[d]

[a] Armed robbery with gun (10 incidents), unarmed robbery (3), theft (3).
[b] Examples: youth is offended because other youth made his sister pregnant (1 incident), pushes desk (1), spills juice (1), pen makes loud sound (1), throws basketball on court (1), monopolizes basketball (1).
[c] Gang initiation—drive-by shooting (2 incidents), joins group fight—cannot explain reason for fight (1), debate over politics (1), unspecified argument (1), other (1).
[d] Percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Middle School Students' Justifications for Violence—From the Interviews

Students rationalized their violent behavior in a variety of ways.

Student 2: *He took the cards out of my hand and threw them at me and then he threw a shoe at me and then I hit him back.*

Student 21: *I felt good because I felt he got what he deserved because he hit me in the head.*

Student 14: *She tried to jump my cousin. She say something about my cousin stole her ring or something, and then my cousin say, "How I'm going to steal your ring?" I kept on saying in my mind if she slaps my cousin, I'm going over there. She slapped my cousin and calling all kinds of names. I said, "All right there, don't call me names." I walked over there and she hit me and she slapped my cousin, so I pushed her out.*

Student 10: *I had a conflict with a girl. She wanted to steal from me. I don't like nobody to steal from me. You want something from me, you ask me for it. If I got it, I'll give it to you. If I can't give it to you I'll tell you I can't give it to you 'cause it might not be mine. But she wanted to steal from me, so we got into a big argument.*

Exhibit 3: ***Location of "Opening Move" in Violence by Students***

	Number	Percentage
School Locations (subtotal)	**(112)**	**(45%)**
Classroom	44	17.9%
Hall or stairs	23	9.4%
School bus	12	4.9%
Physical education: gym (9), locker room (1), playing fields (2)	12	4.9%
Cafeteria	7	2.8%
Outside school, on grounds	5	2.0%
Other location in school	5	2.0%
School recreation room	2	0.8%
School bathroom	2	0.8%
Home Locations (subtotal)	**(56)**	**(23%)**
Inside home	45	18.3%
Outside home, on property	11	4.5%
Public Areas (subtotal)	**(73)**	**(30%)**
Sidewalk or street	42	17.1%
Outside public basketball court	7	2.8%
Other area of park, including playground, pool	7	2.8%
Outside commercial establishment, store, mall, etc.	4	1.6%
Travel to school: walking to bus (3), waiting for bus (3)	6	2.4%
Other public locations	7	2.8%
Other: Church recreation room (2), summer camp (2), social work agency recreation room (1)	**5**	**2%**
Total All Locations	**246**	**100.0%**

findings about rational goals. The students generally fought to retaliate, to defend themselves, or to resist the antagonist's demands. Their actions were bolstered by a strong belief system, evident in these justifications, which served to neutralize any guilt. The students who acted violently usually said the victim had done something to deserve harm. This expression of cultural values, seen in such accounts, is the primary justification for violence. (Examples from the interviews are presented in "Middle School Students' Justifications for Violence—From the Interviews.")

Excuses. Examples of this type of rationale are students' contentions that their free will was impaired by anger, that they were pushed into the incident by aggressors, or that they did not mean to do it. That the percentage of excuses was small is further evidence that the young people in this study viewed violence as a rational, socially acceptable response.

Possibilities for preventive intervention

Markers for intervention. There are several ways in which the study findings could be applied to the design of programs to counter violence. Analysis of the gender of disputants indicated that girls matched boys in number of violent incidents, and this suggests that programs should focus on them as well. Supervising adults—specifically teachers, mothers, and police officers—are prime candidates for training in conflict resolution, since the study revealed that at some point they may be called in to manage the confrontations. The study also revealed that the violent incidents are very brief. This allows only a limited amount of time for intervention, and because at the start of the incident peers, teachers, and parents are the third parties most likely to be on the scene, they would be the best mediators.

The findings regarding location of violent incidents also reveal areas for intervention. The great majority occur at school or at home, highlighting the importance of school staff and parents in violence prevention. Of school locations, the classroom was the site of the largest proportion of incidents, raising the possibility of adopting programs in how to handle relationships in the classroom. The classroom teacher would be the likely candidate to direct these programs. In general, conflict tends to erupt in settings like schools, indicating that structured settings in which adolescents are placed are likely sites for nonviolence programs.

Preventing opening moves from escalating. The social interactionist perspective is a useful basis for developing policies, programs, and practices to address school-based violence prevention. The findings of this study indicate that such initiatives should focus on specific aspects of the transactions, identified here, that precede violent behavior. (See "The Sequence of Events—A Model.") The aim of such early intervention would be to prevent more serious incidents.

Reducing the occurrence of opening moves appears to be the most promising approach to preventing escalation to violence. Social skill curriculums

could incorporate the development of nonviolent responses to behavior that otherwise might follow the same route. Some of the typical opening moves identified in this study could be adopted in the role playing that is part of these curriculums.

One of the most frequent opening moves is offensive touching. The design of school-based violence prevention programs could include policies and practices that strongly discourage this type of behavior, however minor some of its expressions may appear. A well-defined system of rules and discipline could go far to prevent bullies and others who persecute children in schools from engaging in such behavior. All types of offensive touching—throwing something at someone, or pushing, grabbing, shoving, slapping, kicking, or hitting someone—should be considered by everyone in the school

Exhibit 4: ***Justifications and Excuses for Violence***

	Number	Percentage
Justifications (subtotal)	**(167)**	**(84%)**
Retaliation for harmful behavior	57	28.8%
Antagonist's behavior offensive	35	17.7%
Self-defense or to stop victimization	27	13.6%
Loyalties appealed to; aid intimate or friend	25	12.6%
Antagonist's behavior posed threat	14	7.1%
Antagonist refused request	5	2.5%
Fight was inevitable	2	1.0%
Help stranger being beaten	1	0.5%
Promote image	1	0.5%
Excuses (subtotal)	**(31)**	**(16%)**
Free will impaired by anger	13	6.6%
Reluctant; pushed into it by antagonist	11	5.6%
Unintentional; did not mean to do it	5	2.5%
Wanted money	1	0.5%
Free will impaired by alcohol	1	0.5%
Total All Justifications and Excuses	**198***	**100.0%**

* The total is 198 incidents, not 250, because in the other 52 either the interview content was insufficient or the student was a passive victim who did not respond violently.

The Sequence of Events—A Model

Each event in each violent incident was categorized by type, and the events were analyzed to reveal sequences or patterns that can serve as general models of the students' interactions. An example of one common pattern is presented here (the general model is illustrated schematically in exhibit 5).* These patterns could be useful as sources of role-playing scenarios in social skill exercises for students. This example, drawn from the interview transcripts, shows that the presence of third parties can escalate the conflict.

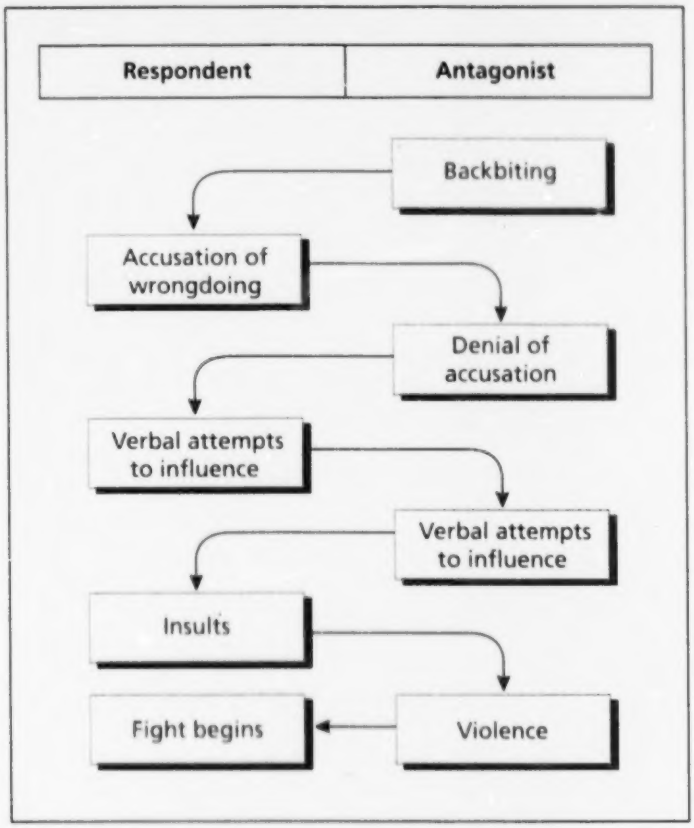
Over the summer this girl fell off her bike and we were laughing, and then for some reason, she started not liking us. Me and my cousin and her got to cussing. She lived up the street and she was walking up the street and started to say something to us and we started whistling and stuff. She just be trying to make me come there and fight her but I ain't never fight her. She would stand out there in the street and say, "What's up? Wanna come out here and do something? Come on." I would just go in the house. I would be outside and I wouldn't say nothing to her and she would just say like "A. got crabs," and stuff, just say something to me for no reason . . . I guess she had got mad.

They got a go-cart and they were riding up and down the street, and then she made faces . . . She stopped in our driveway and say, "Y'all want to do something?" Her and my cousin begin to fight and my grandmother came out there and broke it up and she went back to her house and got her daddy, and then my grandma and her dad started in on it. He was saying stuff like he wasn't going to talk. He used guns and stuff. I was scared because when we were outside he might shoot the house up.

Him and my grandma was out there fussing, and the police they be walking around on the streets and stuff, and my Mama had told them to go down there because he said he would use guns and stuff . . . They went up there and told him, "Don't be saying stuff like that around children and stuff." He said they should learn to sit down and talk things out.

*Space limitations prohibit presentation of all the sequence patterns that emerged from the analysis. They are reported in a forthcoming book by the researcher (tentatively titled *Violent Interactions Among Middle and High School Students*).

Exhibit 5: ***General Model of Sequence Pattern Following Backbiting***



to be very serious, wrongful behavior. The study findings reveal many instances in which these opening moves escalate to fierce combats, suggesting that efforts to reduce this behavior will reduce serious violent incidents.

Where the opening move involves possessions or a possessory interest—behavior seen as often as offensive touching—young people could be taught the social skills needed to manage conflicts arising from these situations. And given the many violent incidents that begin with teasing and rough play, another promising strategy is to promote programs to encourage civic values that discourage ridicule ("put downs"), teasing, and rough play in school.

Specific prevention strategies can be matched to other categories in the typology of opening moves. Although insults and backbiting, for example, are minor affronts, they can be viewed as high-risk behaviors and dealt with as part of the strategy. Peer mediators, who today are often a familiar presence in school, can also receive training to defuse events triggered by the opening moves.

Tackling the values issue

A preference for violent retaliation over other forms of redress, a strong belief in punishment, and a sensitivity to perceived injustice and mistreatment are core values at the heart of these students' violent responses. Students adopt the styles of parents, teachers, and other adults around them, and students' norms will not change unless these models change. Changing these norms may be very difficult. It may be easier to decrease the frequency of the moves, especially the opening moves, in the violent transaction that arises from these values, than to change the values themselves. Nonetheless, a comprehensive violence prevention program could also include activities aimed at changing the values and attitudes that justify violence.

If any belief warrants change, it is retribution, as this was the primary justification for violence. It was the goal in a large proportion (40 percent) of the incidents in which students rationally decided to act violently. Analysis of justifications and excuses also showed the prominence of retribution in neutralizing guilt—the violent act was seen as a logical response to a perceived harm and therefore judged acceptable by the assailant. This suggests that changing beliefs and attitudes about the acceptability of punishment and violent retribution is central to reducing violent conflict. One way schools can do this is by adopting a "civic values" approach, establishing and highlighting rules against retributive punishment of students by students. Small-group interactive sessions could also role play the destructive consequences of personal retributive justice. While belief in retribution is deeply embedded in youth culture, and challenges to the value of physical punishment will be resisted, changing young people's belief in retaliation deserves serious consideration as an aim of school-based programs.

Through role playing and simulations, young people can learn nonviolent

means of persuasion. These exercises can be created from the typical sequences or patterns of events brought to light here.

Notes

1. Kann, Laura, et al., "Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 1993," *CDC Surveillance Summaries, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 44 No. SS–1*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, March 24, 1995:29.

2. Taylor, Bruce M., *Changes in Criminal Victimization, 1994–95*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, April 1997:3.

3. Snyder, Howard N., and Melissa Sickmund, *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: A Focus on Violence*, Pittsburgh: National Center for Juvenile Justice, 1995. Their estimates of the projected increase in juvenile arrests for aggravated assault range from 21 percent to 129 percent in the next 15 years.

4. For this theoretical framework see Tedeschi, James T., and Richard B. Felson, *Violence, Aggression, and Coercive Actions*, Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1994.

5. Recent reviews of the literature on adolescent violence have called for such studies. See American Psychological Association, *Violence and Youth*, Washington, D.C., 1993; Reiss, Albert J., and Jeffrey A. Roth, *Understanding and Preventing Violence*, Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1993.

6. Luckenbill, David F., "Criminal Homicide as a Situated Transaction," *Social Problems* 25 (1977):176–86.

7. Tedeschi and Felson, *Violence, Aggression, and Coercive Actions*.

8. Some find these programs promising. See Elliott, Delbert S., *Youth Violence: An Overview* (Boulder, Colorado: The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, 1994); Tolan, Patrick and Nancy Guerra, *What Works in Reducing Adolescent Violence: An Empirical Review of the Field* (Boulder, Colorado: The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, 1994). Others disagree. See Webster, Daniel, "The Unconvincing Case for School-Based Conflict Resolution Programs for Adolescents," *Health Affairs* 12 (1993):126–141.

9. The definition, borrowed from Richard J. Gelles, was operationalized by using his widely adopted "Conflict Tactics Technique Scale" (Gelles, Richard J., *Family Violence*, Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1979).

10. For a paper devoted exclusively to these opening moves, see Lockwood, Daniel, "The Opening Move in Violent Interactions Among Selected African-American Middle School Students," *Challenge* 7 (1996):25–41.

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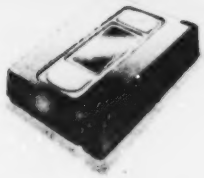

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